

A

# SPEECH

Touching

## TOLERATION

IN

MATTERS of RELIGION.

Delivered a hundred years since by a  
Privy Councillor to King JAMES the 5th. of

# SCOTLAND.



Printed in the Year 1668.

SIR

Amongst the many blessings your Subjects enjoy under the your Government, this is not the least, that for the weal of your Majesty, and the publick good of the Kingdom, the meanest of your Subjects may freely open his mind, and declare his opinion unto you his Sovereign.

And if ever there was a time, in which grave, good and sound counsel should be delivered to your Majesty, it is this, and the difficulties of the Commonwealth do now require it. Nor ever, in matters of Advice and Consultation, can we embrace and follow what is most reasonable, and what, according to Laws, Justice and Equity, should be, but what necessity driveth us unto, and what is most convenient for the present time to be, and what we may well and fairly accomplish and bring to pass.

The Estate of your Kingdom is troubled with diversity of opinions concerning Religion: It is to be wished, that the only true Religion were in the hearts of all your Subjects (since diversity of opinions of Religion, and Heresies, are the very punishment of God Almighty upon men, for their horrible Vices, and roaring sin. And when men forsake his fear and true obedience, God abandoneth them to their own opinions and fantasies in Religion; out of which arise, Partialities, Factions, Divisions, Strife, Intestine Discords, which burst forth into Civil War, and in short time bring Kingdoms and Commonwealths to their last periods.) But matters arising to such a height and disorder, as by all appearance, they are like to advance in this Kingdom the number of:

of the Sectaries daily increasing, without dissembling my thoughts to your Majesty, the preservation of the people being the Supreme and Principal Law which God Almighty hath enjoyned to all Princes.

I hold it more expedient to give place to the exercise of both Religions, than under pretence and shadow of them to suffer the Common Peace of your Subjects to be torn in pieces. What can wisdom (Sir) advise you to do with these Separatists? Either they must be tolerated for a time, or they must altogether be removed, and that by Death or Banishment.

So soon as a Prince beginneth to Spoil, Banish, Kill, Burn his People, for matters abstract from sense, and altogether spiritual, he becometh, as it were, a plague unto them.

It is an Errour of State in a Prince, for an opinion of Piety, to condemn to Death the Adherers to new Doctrine: For, the constancy and patience of those who voluntarily suffer all temporal Miseries, and Death it self, for matters of Faith, stir up and invite numbers, who at first, and before they had suffered, were ignorant of their Faith and Doctrine, not onely to favour their Cause, but to imbrace their Opinions, Pity and Commiseration opening the gates. Thus their Belief spreadeth it self abroad, and their number daily increaseth.

It is no less Errour of State to banish them. Banished men are so many Enemies abroad, ready upon all occasions to invade their Native Countrey, to trouble the Peace and Tranquillity of your Kingdom.

To take Arms against Sectaries and Separatists will be a great Enterprize, a matter hard, and of many dangers; Religion cannot be preached by Arms; the first Christians detested that form of proceedings; Force and compulsion may bring forth Hypocrites, not true Christians. If there be any Heresie amongst your People, this wound is in the Soul; our Souls being spiritual Substances, upon which Fire and Iron cannot work, They must be overcome by spiritual Arms; Love the men, and pitty their Errours.

Who can lay upon a man a necessity to believe that which he will not believe, or what he will believe, or doth believe, not to believe? No Prince hath such power over the Souls and thoughts of men, as he hath over their bodies. Now to ruine and extirpate all those Sectaries, what will it prove else than to cut off one of your arms, to the great prejudice of your Kingdom, and weakning of the State, they daily increasing in number, and no man being so miserable and mean but he is a member of the State?

The more easie manner, and nobler way, were to tolerate both Religions, and grant a Place to two Churches in the Kingdom, till it shall please Almighty God to return the minds of your Subjects, and turn them all of one will and opinion. Be content to keep that which ye may, Sir, since ye cannot that which ye would.

It is a false and erroneous opinion, *That a Kingdom cannot subsist which tolerateth two Religions.* Diversity of Religion shutteth not up Society, nor barreth civil conversation among men; a little time will make persons of different Religions contract such acquaintance, custom, familiarity together, that they will be inter-

intermixt in one City, Family, yea, Marriage-bed, State and Religion, having nothing common.

Why (I pray) may not two Religions be suffered in a State (till by some sweet and easie means they may be reduced to a right Government) since in the Church (which should be union it self, and of which the *Roman* Church much vaunteth) almost infinite Sects, and kinds of Monks are suffered, differing in their Laws, Rules of Government, fashions of living, dyer, apparel, maintenance, and opinions of perfection, and who sequester themselves from our publick union? The *Roman* Empire had its extension, not by similitude and likeness of Religion. Different Religions, providing they enterprize nor practise nothing against the Politick Laws of the Kingdom, may be tolerated in a State.

The Murthers, Massacres, Battels which arise and are belike daily to increase amongst Christians, all which are undertaken for Religion, are a thousand times more execrable, and be more open, plain, flat impiety, than this Liberty of diversity of Religions, with a quiet peace, can be unjust.

Forasmuch as the greatest part of those who flesh themselves in blood and slaughter, and overturn by arms the peace of their neighbours (whom they should love as themselves) spoyling and ravaging like famished Lions, sacrifice their Souls to the infernal powers, without further hopes or means of their ever recovering and coming back, when those others are in some way of repentance.

In seeking Liberty of Religion, these men seek not to believe any thing that may come in their Brains; but to use Religion according to the first Christian Institutions,

stitutions, serving God, and obeying the Laws under which they were born.

That Maxim so often repeated amongst the Church-Men at Rome, *That the Erase and abolishing of Hereticks is more necessary than that of Infidels*, is well applied for the enlarging and increasing the Dominions, Sovereignty and Power of the Pope, but not for the amplifying and extending of the Christian Religion, and the weal and benefit of the Christian Commonwealth.

Kingdoms and Sovereignities should not be governed by the Laws and Interests of Priests and Church-Men, but according to the exigency, need, and as the case requireth, of the Publick weal, which often is necessitated to pass and tolerate some defects and faults. It is the duty of all Christian Princes to endeavour, and take pains, that their Subjects embrace the true Faith, as that temerably and in even parts they observe all Gods Commandments, and not more one Commandment than another.

Notwithstanding, when a Vice cannot be extirpate and taken away, without the ruine of the State, it would appear to humane Judgements, that it should be suffered. Neither is there a greater obligation, bond, necessity of Law to punish Hereticks more than Fornicators, which yet for the peace and tranquillity of the State are tolerated and pass over. Neither can a greater inconvenience and harm follow, if we should suffer men to live in our Commonwealth, who believe not, nor embrace not all our Opinions. In an Estate many things, are for the time tolerated, because they cannot, without the total ruin of the State, be suddenly amended and reformed.

These

These men are of that same nature and condition of which we are; they worship, as we do, one God; they believe those very same holy Records; we both aim at Salvation; we both fear to offend God; we both set before us our happiness; The difference between them and us hangeth upon this one point, that they; having found abuses in our Church, require a Reformation. Now shall it be said, for that we run divers waies to one end, understand not rightly others Language, we shall pursue others with Fire and Sword, and extirpate others from the Face of the Earth? God is not in the bitter division and alienation of affections, nor the raging flames of sedition, nor in the tempests of the turbulent whirlwinds of contradictions and disputations, but in the calm and gentle breathings of peace and concord. If any wander out of the High-way, we bring him to it again; If any be in darkness, we shew him light, and kill him not. In Musical Instruments, if a string jar and be out of tune, we do not frettingly break it, but leisurely veer it about to a Concord: and shall we be so churlish, cruel, uncharitable, so wedded to our own Superstitious Opinions, that we will barbarously banish, kill, burn those whom by Love and Sweetness we might readily win and recall again?

Let us win and merit of these men by reason, let them be cited to a free Council; it may be they shall not be proved Hereticks, neither that they maintain Opinions condemned by the ancient Councils, let their Religion be compared and parallel'd with the Religion of the first age of the Church.

Shall we hold this People worse than the Jews, which yet have their Synagogues at Rome it self? let them receive instructions from a free and lawful Council,



cil, and forsake their errors when they shall be clearly and fairly demonstrated unto them. Heresie is an error in the fundamental grounds of Religion, so his intentendeth a resolution in separation. Let a good Council be convoked, and see if they be ready or not to reunite themselves to us.

That which they believe is not evil, but to some it will appear they believe not enough, and that there is in them rather a defect of good, than any habit of evil. Other points when they shall be considered, shall be found to consist in external ceremonies of the Church, rather than in substance of Doctrine, or what is essential to Christianity. These men should be judged before condemned, and they should be heard before they be judged, which being holily and uprightly done, we shall finde it is not our Religion, but our private interests and passions, which trouble us and our State.

And thus much I have said in answer to the first point, which was, whether we should receive into our Church those who are separated from us. I have answered it in the affirmative, and have shewed that it is not only lawful, but also necessary, and that it is the duty of the Church to receive them, and to restore them to the communion of the Church. I have also shewed that it is not only lawful, but also necessary, and that it is the duty of the Church to receive them, and to restore them to the communion of the Church.

Let us win and melt of their men by reason, let them be cited to a free Council: it may be they shall not be proved Hereticks, but if they maintain their Opinions condemned by the ancient Councils let their Religion be compared and paralleled with the Religion of the first age of the Church.

And thus much I have said in answer to the second point, which was, whether we should receive into our Church those who are separated from us. I have answered it in the affirmative, and have shewed that it is not only lawful, but also necessary, and that it is the duty of the Church to receive them, and to restore them to the communion of the Church.



